GUIDE TO THE MS14 KANURI FILE

[The MS14 Kanuri (Kanoury, Beriberi) file contains information on the dominant ethnic group of the Bornu Province in northeastern Nigeria. Their homeland is the Bornu Emirate, the major division of the province. It has a history as a political entity stretching back at least 1100 years and has been a Muslim emirate since the eleventh century. It is located from 11-13 degrees North latitude and 11-13 1/2 degrees East longitude. It is bordered on the north by the Republic of Niger, on the northeast by Chad, and on the east by Cameroon. The Kanuri language has the largest number of speakers of the Central Saharan language family. Most Kanuri school children also speak some Hausa. The approximately 2.2 million Kanuri (1967 census) may be found in all the major cities in northeastern Nigeria and the neighboring sections of Chad and Niger, although Bornu contains the vast majority of Kanuri. They are sedentary hoe agriculturalists. The main crops are millet, guinea corn (sorghum), and ground nuts (peanuts). Most keep a few goats and sheep and trade with the pastoral Fulani and Shuwa for beef. The virilocal extended family is the basic socioeconomic unit. It is more than just a kin group, containing clients or retainers and concubines as well. But relations here and in the society at large are patterned on idealized kin relations, especially that of the father-son, superior-subordinate relationship. Preferred marriage for a man is to a young girl, 10-14, who is a virgin. But this is not as common for first marriages as one to an older, divorced woman, who will require less bridewealth. Marriage between cousins is common. In divorce, children stay with the father. Kin relations are recognized through both lines, although agnatic ties take precedence for legal matters and inheritance. Kanuri do not live in isolated units. Instead they may be found in settlements ranging from hamlets of three to four households, scattered every one to two

miles over the countryside, to cities of over 10,000 people, which contain one quarter of the population. The capital (Maiduguri) is a city of 80,000. Before European contact, Bornu was a feudal society with royal lineages, a land-holding aristocracy, peasants, and slaves. There are no longer any slaves and due to political and economic changes, many commoners are wealthier than some aristocrats. In urban areas, social stratification is pronounced. The emirate is ruled by the Shehu, who is both the political and religious leader. Under him, political authority runs through a series of territorial leaders from district to village to ward down to household head. The Kanuri are Muslims. They strictly observe Muslim law, education, social precepts and food taboos. The Bornu Emirate was under English colonial administration from 1902 to 1960, when it became part of a province in newly independent Nigeria.

There are four sources in the Kanuri file, all in English. 1: Cohen is a general monograph covering history (in detail), social relations, economics and politics. Special emphasis is given to the effect of family relations on other social relations. 2: Rosman is a discussion of how acculturation differently affects different social classes and how the social structure itself affects the acculturation process. It also covers economics, political and social organization and religion. 3: Cohen focuses on interpersonal relations, the family and political behavior. The interrelations of class and status with the feudal chains of superior/subordinate relations of loyalty are described as the source of strength in Kanuri social organization. 4: Cohen is a brief article on an agricultural experiment, which also illustrates attitudes toward innovation and political authority. Cohen's sources are based on 26 months of fieldwork (1956-1957, and summers 1964 and 1965) in a village of 2000 near the center of the province. Rosman's is based

on 12 months (1956-1957) in a city of 12,000 in the north. Both spoke Kanuri and conducted interviews in it for at least part of their fieldwork. Religion, language and physical anthropology are some of the outstanding omissions from the file. However, the data that are present, especially that on how the family affects the rest of society, is of high quality. The file was processed between 1969 and 1972.]